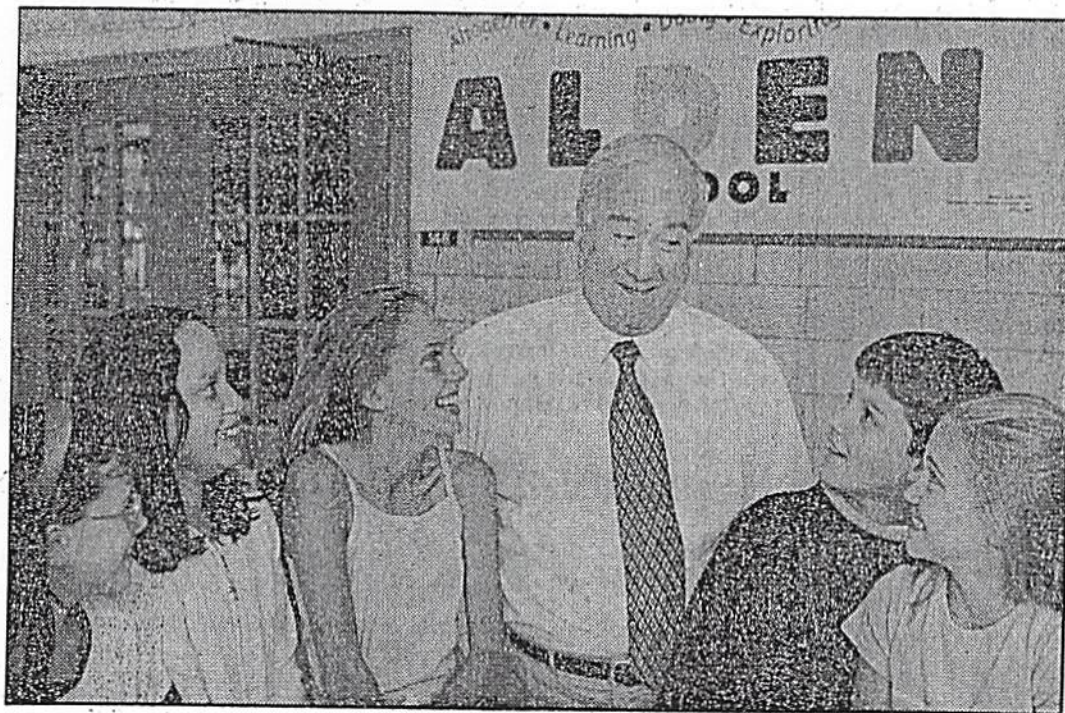


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TOM TAJIMA/The Patriot Ledger

Charles Elliott, the retiring principal at the Alden School, shares a lighter moment with fourth-graders Emily Plesco, Jaclynne Gomez, Christine Drummy, Taylor Williams and Kate Cipolletti.

Elliott is stepping down as Alden School principal after 35 years in education

By KENDRA JOHNSON
The Patriot Ledger

DUXBURY — As an administrator, retiring Alden School principal Charles Elliott has paperwork, meetings and other responsibilities, but parents and faculty members said his priority has always been the students.

Elliott is retiring this year after 35 years in education and 27 years in the Duxbury school system.

His favorite part of the job?

"It's when I get to spend time with the kids, wherever it is. Whether it's in the classroom or the rare occasion I get playground duty," he said.

Alden houses grades 3 and 4 and was opened two years ago after the former elementary school, where Elliott was principal, was divided.

Adults who have worked with Elliott said his concern for the students is evident.

"He was always thinking about the kids," said

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Principal of Duxbury school is retiring after 35-year career

■ RETIRING

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parent Marion O'Connor. "They were always his top priority."

Schools Superintendent Eileen Williams said the principal's job has been transformed over the years and that Elliott has made the necessary changes while keeping his focus on the children.

"Clearly, Charlie's strength is his care for children," Williams said. "There's very little about the school system that Charlie doesn't know."

Elliott graduated from Bridgewater State College with a degree in elementary education in 1964. He taught elementary school in Randolph until 1972, when he accepted a job in Duxbury as assistant principal.

Elliott said he had always wanted to teach young children.

"I think everybody has an age group they're more comfortable with," Elliott said. "For me it was always the middle elementary grades."

Elliott said he has learned that an effective principal has many faces.

"If they're hurt or upset, they need

to be comfortable you're going to help them," Elliott said. "When the cafeteria is noisy, you have to let them know you want it to be better."

Alden school council member Kittie Marrone has worked with Elliott as a teacher and a parent.

"My son Andrew really respected him but wasn't afraid of him. That's a great quality in a principal," said Marrone, a third-grade teacher.

Elliott and his wife, Pamela, live in Whitman. They have been married 31 years and have two children. Cindi, 30, lives in Wareham and Matt, 27, lives in Newton.

Pamela Elliott met her husband when she was a student teacher in his fifth-grade class.

She is now the principal at Donovan School in Randolph and will return to classroom teaching in the fall. She said she loves the education profession.

"I couldn't imagine doing anything else for a living and I think Charlie feels the same."

Elliott said he looks forward to spending more time with his wife and their children and wants to continue

working part-time in some capacity in education.

The woman Elliott hired four years ago to be his assistant principal at the former elementary school will follow in his footsteps. Sue Skeiber, assistant principal at Duxbury Middle School, will become the new head of Alden School in July.

Skeiber said during the two years they worked together, Elliott helped her learn the basics of the job, including discipline, budgets and evaluations.

"He really helped me in those first two years to get my feet firmly planted in the ground," Skeiber said.

Skeiber will also assume Elliott's responsibility as director of the professional development center.

Elliott's advice to Skeiber — to provide the staff with an environment where they can do their best — mirrors the quality Marrone most appreciates about him.

"He has a lot of faith in his staff. He doesn't hover over us," Marrone said. "That allows people to be creative and be their best. That's what I admire most about him."